

THE PARTICIPIUM ABSOLUTUM
IN THE SANSKRIT, GREEK AND LATIN

From the morphological point of view the participles of the Sanskrit, Greek and Latin languages have two groups. One of these groups fits entirely in the verbal system of the language concerned, i. e. it adjusts itself to the gender and aspect system of the verb, while the other group, without containing the suffix of the gender or the aspect, is formed directly from the root of the verb (from a form of it with a certain grade of ablaut¹. Examples for the former group are in Sanskrit the *participium imperfectum activi* *dadat-*, the *participium imperfectum passivi* *kriyamāna-*, the *participium perfectum activi* *dadivāṇs-*, etc., in Greek the *participium imperfectum activi* ἀγγέλλων or διδούς, the *participium perfectum activi* δεδωκώς, and in Latin the *participium imperfectum activi* *cupiens*. Examples for the second group are in Sanskrit the *participium perfectum passivi* *datta-* or *kṛta-*, in Greek the *adiectivum verbale* δοτός, and in Latin the *participium perfectum passivi* *datus*². However, as will become apparent from the forthcoming, where the syntactic function of the participles will be discussed, we see only a slight difference between the two groups from this point of view.

From the syntactic point of view in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin the participles, just like the adjective, can have an attributive function beside nouns (in Latin and Greek this is called *participium coniunctum*), while without nonuns — in a substantival value — they can have the function of any part of a sentence that can be filled by nouns, viz. the function of the subject, the object, etc.³. It is not necessary to speak any more about the above two syntactic functions. More interesting is the third one, when the participle — related to one of the nouns of the sentence — has an adverbial function, just like other adjectives.

1. H. HIRT, *Indogermanische Grammatik*, Teil IV, Heidelberg, 1928, pp. 88 ff.

2. H. HIRT, *op. cit.*, Teil VI, Heidelberg, 1934, p. 195.

3. E. gr.: *Audentes fortuna iuvat* (VERG. *Aen.* 10,284).

This is again such a syntactic function which can be filled by any adjective, and in Latin and Greek in such cases the adjective is called *attributum praedicativum*. It has to be noted, however, that the participles have an adverbial function more frequently than other adjectives. The participles, when they have an adverbial function, in Greek and Latin are also called *participium coniunctum*. According to the Latin and Greek grammatical literature, the participle of the character of *participium coniunctum* can have the role of an adverbial modifier of time, adverbial modifier of cause, adverbial modifier of manner, of condition, of concession, and sometimes (especially the *participium instans*) an adverbial modifier of purpose⁴. We cannot agree with this syntactic interpretation, because in our opinion the participles can only have the function of an adverbial modifier of state or, at the most the function of an adverbial modifier of condition⁵ or of concession⁶ in the sentence. They can define time, but only on account of their aspect, and in such cases they are no adverbial modifiers of time⁷. They can express cause, but only inasmuch as a state can express the cause⁸, and the case is similar also in connection with the expression of the purpose⁹. The participle cannot be an adverbial modifier of manner already on account of the fact that in the case of the adjective the form of the adverbial modifier of manner is the *adverbium* that is the *casus adverbii* of adjective. In fact, only that adverb can be regarded as an adverbial modifier of manner, which belongs to a verb and does not relate to any of the nouns in the sentence. If an adjective — besides belonging to the verb — also relates to one of the nouns in the sentence, then we would call it an adverbial modifier of state¹⁰, and in the languages mentioned above this is supported by the fact that the adverbial modifier of state agrees in gender, number and case with the noun to which it relates, thus formally it behaves like an attribute.

4. E. SCHWYZER-A. DEBRUNNER, *Griechische Grammatik*, II, München, 1950, pp. 388-391; J. B. HOFMANN-A. SZANTYR, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, München, 1965, pp. 384 f.; R. KÜHNER-C. STEGMANN, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache. Satzlehre*, Teil I, München, 1962, pp. 774-777.

5. E. gr.: ... *hostes... hanc adepti victoriam in perpetuum se fore victores confidebant* (CAES. B. G. 5,39,4).

6. ... *ut oculus, sic animus se non videns alia cernit* (CIC. Tusc. 1,67).

7. E. gr.: *Dionysius... tyrannus Syracusis expulsus Corinthi pueros docebat* (CIC. Tusc. 3,27).

8. E. gr.: ... *Dionysium..., qui cultros metuens tonsorios candenti carbone sibi adurebat capillum* (CIC. Off. 2,25).

9. E. gr.: *Ipse... Genuam repetit... Italiam defensurus* (LIV. 21,32,5).

10. E. gr.: *Flens me obsecravit* (PLAUT. Trin. 154); ... *Petrosidius equilifer... fortissime pugnans occiditur* (CAES. B. G. 5,37,5); ... *mortuos Persae cera circumlitos condunt* (CIC. Tusc. 1,108). In these sentences the *participia coniuncta* are no adverbial modifiers of manner, but these *participia coniuncta* are adverbial modifiers of state. Namely, it is not the supplication that is weeping, but it is Charmides who is weeping. The *flens* is adverbial modifier of the *obsecravit*, it belongs to the *obsecravit*, but this *flens* is relating to Charmides. Similarly it is not the murder that is fighting, but it is the eagle-bearer, who is fighting, and it is not the burial that is waxed, but the dead persons are waxed.

At present, however, we should like to speak especially about the fourth function of the participles, when they stand in those participial structures, which are called in Sanskrit *locativus absolutus* and *genitivus absolutus*, in Greek *genitivus absolutus* and in Latin *ablativus absolutus*. In such cases, contrary to the *participium coniunctum*, the participle is called *participium absolutum*. This is why this term appears in the title of our paper.

Before examining the above participial structures, let us deal with such a usage of the participles, which is still called *participium coniunctum* in Latin!

Let us see how the participle *deprehensi* has to be understood in the sentence « *Is (sc. Lucius Tarquinius)... senatum docet... se missum a M. Crasso, qui Catilinae nuntiaret, ne eum Lentulus et Cethegus aliique... deprehensi terrent* »¹¹. If this has an attributive function, then this sentence should be interpreted, and it was actually interpreted by the Romans, so that « He (viz. Lucius Tarquinius) informed the senatus that he was sent by Marcus Crassus to convey the message to Catilina that he should not be frightened by the arrested Lentulus and Cethegus and the others ». If we interpreted it as an adverb, then the sense of this sentence would not differ too much from the above, inasmuch as it would mean that « he should not be frightened by Lentulus and Cethegus and the others arrested (as arrested) ».

But is either of the two interpretations adequate? Namely Catilina is not frightened by the arrested Lentulus and Cethegus and his other comrades, but he is frightened by that fact that Lentulus and his comrades are arrested, that is by the arrest of Lentulus, Cethegus and the others. Thus in Latin *Lentulus et Cethegus aliique deprehensi* can mean not only that the « arrested Lentulus, Cethegus and the others », but also « the arrest of Lentulus, Cethegus and the others », and in the case of this sentence the later interpretation is the correct one. This interpretation is, of course, frequently necessary not only in nominative¹², but also in prepositional cases, for example « *post civitatem a L. Bruto liberatam* »¹³ should be interpreted « after the liberation of the state by Lucius Brutus ». In certain applications of the Latin gerundives always this interpretation will be correct. For example « *gaudere omittendis doloribus* »¹⁴ means « we rejoice at the ceasing of the sufferings », and « *felix vobis corrumpendis fuit* »¹⁵ means « he was successful in your diverting to the wrong path ».

11. SALL. *Cat.* 48,4.

12. E. gr.: in accusative: *vos vitam ereptam neglegitis* (CIC. *Man.* 5,11) or in genitive: *Sibi... bene gestae, mihi conservatae rei publicae dat testimonium* (CIC. *Att.* 2,1,6).

13. CIC. *Ph.* 5,17.

14. CIC. *Fin.* 1,56.

15. LIV. 3,17,2.

In Latin it occurs even in a simple attributive structure that the adjective in fact does not have an attributive function beside a noun (nor does have a function of an adverbial modifier of state). Thus *in medio foro* can also mean « in the middle of the forum », and rather « *in foro medio* » means what can be expected from such an attributive structure, namely to have the meaning « in the middle forum ». The « *in summo monte* » means « on the top of the mountain », although « *in monte summo* » can also mean « on the highest mountain ». In Greek in the case of such an interpretation, when the adjective does not have the attributive function, the word order is definitely inverse, and the noun is at the place of the attribute, while the adjective is at the place of the noun. For example ἡ πόλις μέση is « the middle of the town », that is literally « the town middle », while ἡ μέση πόλις means « the middle town », or ἡ νῆσος ἐσχάτη is « the edge of the island », that is literally « the island edge », but ἡ ἐσχάτη νῆσος means « the farther-most island »¹⁶. Thus on the basis of the Greek word order this structure could be called « inverse attributive structure », meaning by this not only that the noun stands at the place of the attribute, but also that it is not the adjective which has the function of the attribute beside the noun, but the noun is the attribute beside the adjective.

Let us see now what is the situation about in the Sanskrit *locativus absolutus*, the Greek *genitivus absolutus* and the Latin *ablativus absolutus*! The structure *gacchatsu dineṣu* means as *locativus absolutus* «while the days are passing», and not « on the elapsing (passing) days », the *goṣu dagdhāsu sa gataḥ* means « he went after the milking of the cows », and not « on the occasion of the milked cows ». The θεοῦ διδόντος means « at the giving of the god », « when the god gives », if the god gives. The *qui* (sc. Pythagoras), *cum Superbo regnante in Italiam venisset*,...¹⁷ means « he (viz. Pythagoras), when he had come to Italy during the reign of (Tarquinius) Superbus », and *castris positis* means « after the pitching of the camp »¹⁸. The fact that the noun in ablative and the participle agreeing with it in gender, number and case do not yet definitely form an *ablativus absolutus* structure, is well illustrated by the Latin sentence *interfecit matrem suam ense dextro*, what can also mean « he killed his mother with drawn sword », and in this meaning this is not *ablativus absolutus*, but in the case of an interpretation « he killed his mother by having drawn his sword (that is with the drawing of his sword) » or « because he drew his sword » the *ense dextro* has already to be regarded as an *ablativus absolutus* structure. Thus it is evident that in the latter case the participle does not have an attributive function, but the fourth syntactic function as in the above mentioned inverse attributive struc-

16. H. MENGE, *Repetitorium der griechischen Syntax*, München, 1961, p. 94.

17. Cic. *Tusc.* 1,38.

18. Liv. 2,39,5.

ture, and in fact in such cases the attributive function is filled by the noun. Therefore this can also be called *participium absolutum*, because it is only formally attached to a noun, but sylleptically the noun is attached to it, although the denomination *participium absolutum* is not used on this basis.

What is the explanation for the fact that instead of the noun expressing the action these languages use the participle in the case of both *Lentulus deprehensus* and *Tarquinius Superbo regnante*? When one said «during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus», in our opinion, he could only think of the reigning Tarquinius Superbus, and at an early stage of thinking men would have drawn the reign of Tarquinius Superbus so that it would have drawn Tarquinius Superbus as a ruler, with his royal insignia, and it would have represented the phrase «at the opening of the cupboard door» with a cupboard with opening door, and «the arrest of Lentulus» by drawing Lentulus behind grates of prison. The reigning as the abstract noun of the action cannot be drawn and represented, it can only be represented recently by the sequence of the motion picture.

Can we arrive at some conclusion on the basis of the fact that in these three ancient Indo-European languages having significant literary monuments we find the *locativus absolutus*, the *genitivus absolutus* and, respectively, the *ablativus absolutus* existed? The assumption is obviously correct according to which this structure had already existed in Indo-European, and thus this approach outlined above arrived at a common Indo-European characteristic¹⁹. The fact that — in our opinion — the inverse attributive structure did not develop in Old Indian further in that way, as it did in Latin, permits the assumption that the Sanskrit *locativus absolutus*, as well as the Greek *genitivus absolutus* and the Latin *ablativus absolutus* structures furnished the basis for the development of the inverse attributive structure, and not *vice versa*.

We should like to mention still a few minor characteristics of this structure in the three languages mentioned above.

One of these is that in Latin the suffix of the *participium imperfectum activi* is in the *ablativus absolutus* -e, while otherwise it is ī. It can be presumed that this difference is just because in the inverse attributive structure of the *ablativus absolutus* the role of the participle is more of the character of a noun than in the *participium coniunctum*, and it can also be presumed that careful investigations would show that when in Latin the *participium imperfectum activi* stands in the function of a noun, then also otherwise the suffix is more frequently -e than -ī.

The second remark is that when in Sanskrit the participle *sat-* in locative appears seemingly as a pleonasm — mostly beside a *partici-*

19. H. HIRT, *op. cit.*, Teil VII, pp. 92 ff.

*pium perfectum passivi*²⁰ —, then its reason is that this participle, as we have mentioned in the beginning of this paper, does not entirely fit in the gender and aspect system of the verb and this is felt by the language. The opposite to this is that also in Sanskrit occurs the phenomenon called in Latin²¹ *ablativus absolutus* «*mancus*», that is when in Sanskrit the participle in locative is missing and there is another noun (or adjective) in its place, for example: *rakṣitāri tvayi* «in the case of your protection». The reason for this is in Sanskrit that the language strongly feels the verbal origin of the *nomen agentis rakṣitā*. This phenomenon is even less surprising in Latin, since in fact it is a general phenomenon there that the inverse attributive structures can be formed not only with the help of participles.

Finally we remark that the Sanskrit *genitivus absolutus* is not regarded by us as an inverse attributive structure of full value. This is used in the case of synchronous actions, when the noun in genitive «is interested» in another action, for example *siṃhasya vane bhramato ravir astamgataḥ*. It is true that this can also be interpreted as «during the roaming of the lion in the forest the Sun set», but in fact — whatever the usual and beautiful translation of it may be — here we only have to do — in our opinion — with the meaning «for the lion roaming in the forest the Sun set».

20. E. gr.: *andhatām prāpteśūlūkeṣu satsu* or only *myte patyau*.

21. J. B. HOFMANN-A. SZANTYR, *op. cit.*, pp. 138 f.; R. KÜHNER-C. STEGMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 779 f.; A. ERNOUT-F. THOMAS, *Syntax latine*, Paris, 1972², p. 103.